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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General briefs Security Council on his recent travels in Europe and Africa; reiterates importance of UNPROFOR presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* Secretary-General expresses sorrow and shock at Tel Aviv bus bombing; pledges continued United Nations support for Middle East peace process.

* Special Representative Akashi condemns latest Bosnian Serb offensive against Zepa; demands end to attacks against civilians and immediate access for humanitarian organizations.

* UNPROFOR Force Commander discusses evacuation of civilians from Zepa with Bosnian Serb military leader, amid reports town's defenders have agreed to surrender.

* International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia issues arrest warrants for Bosnian Serb leaders on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity.

* High Commissioner for Human Rights updates Economic and Social Council on recent developments in former Yugoslavia, Nigeria and Chechnya.

* International Law Commission concludes forty-seventh session in Geneva, having made progress on draft code of crimes against peace and security of mankind.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today reiterated the importance of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said the United Nations could not continue to offer humanitarian assistance to more than two million refugees and displaced persons without that presence. He made those comments to correspondents after briefing the Security Council on his recent travels in Europe and Africa, and on the meeting on the

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Bosnian crisis in London on Friday.

Regarding the "double key" arrangement for the use of air power, the Secretary-General said he was awaiting the outcome of today's meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Council. He added that he was in daily contact with the NATO Secretary-General with a view to reinforcing cooperation between the two Organizations and streamlining the double key approach.

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The Secretary-General expressed sorrow and shock following yesterday's terrorist attack on a commuter bus in Tel Aviv, Israel. He described the bombing as a vicious act of violence.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said he was encouraged by the determination of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to continue the peace process. The United Nations would exert all possible efforts to support the forces of peace in the region, he stressed, especially by providing economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi has strongly condemned the latest Bosnian Serb offensive against the safe area of Zepa. He said civilians there were being subjected to an onslaught of artillery, tank and mortar fire, and had very little medical care. Only two humanitarian convoys had gained access in the last two months and food stocks were exhausted.

Mr. Akashi demanded that the Bosnian Serb leadership refrain from any further action that would threaten the safety of the civilian population of Zepa. He demanded immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations. He also called on the Bosnian Serbs to permit the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to evacuate vulnerable non-combatants who so wished.

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There were reports today that Bosnian Serb forces had entered Zepa and found the town to be deserted, according to a United Nations spokesman. He said the civilian population and the town's defenders might have fled towards the north-east. However, the Bosnian Government denied reports that a surrender agreement had been reached. The Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, met today with Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic to discuss the evacuation of civilians from Zepa.

Fighting in the Bihac pocket moderated yesterday and again today, the spokesman continued. He called attention to the humanitarian situation in Bihac, noting that the Croatian Serbs had prevented relief supplies from entering the pocket. However, conditions in Sarajevo had improved somewhat with the arrival of several convoys in recent days. Some 500 metric tons of relief supplies

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reached the Bosnian capital today.

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The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has issued warrants for the arrest of the leaders of the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs, accusing them of war crimes. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and army commander Ratko Mladic were charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. Those charges arose from atrocities perpetrated against civilians throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the sniping campaign against civilians in Sarajevo, and from the taking of peace-keepers as hostages and the use of them as human shields. Croatian Serb leader Milan Martic was charged in connection with the firing of cluster-bombs into Zagreb last May. In all, 24 warrants were issued by the Tribunal.

Prosecutor Richard Goldstone said the charges illustrated a consistent prosecution strategy -- the investigation and indictment of leaders in the former Yugoslavia who were suspected of being responsible, either directly or indirectly, for widespread and serious violations of international humanitarian law. That strategy included the investigation of lower-level persons directly involved in carrying out the crimes in order to build effective cases against the leaders who were party to the overall planning and organization of those crimes.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, today appealed for an end to human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia. He told the Economic and Social Council in Geneva that Bosnian Serb attacks on safe areas were a matter of great concern, citing reports of executions of soldiers and civilians, ethnic cleansing and rapes. He stressed that United Nations human rights operations in the former Yugoslavia would continue to do all they could to assist the victims, verify the facts and improve the situation.

Mr. Ayala Lasso went on to say that his Office was in direct contact with the Nigerian Government regarding the recent judgements against 40 citizens, including former President Olusegun Obasanjo. He expressed the hope that the Government would cooperate effectively with United Nations human rights mechanisms and respect its international obligations.

The High Commissioner also expressed concern about human rights violations in Checheya. He noted that he had sent a mission to the Russian Federation to meet with the Foreign Minister and other Government representatives. For the moment, his Office was trying to sponsor consultations with a view to finding a way to respond to the situation in Chechnya.

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The International Law Commission has concluded its forty-seventh session

in Geneva. During the session, the Commission made progress on a draft code of crimes against the peace and security of mankind, and on the issues of State responsibility and liability for the injurious consequences of acts not prohibited by international law. It also dealt with the law and practice relating to reservations to treaties, and the issue of State succession and its impact on the nationality of natural and legal persons.

The Commission was established by the General Assembly in 1947 to promote the codification and progressive development of international law in areas where customary law did not exist or had not sufficiently evolved. Its expert members, who represent the world's principal legal systems, are assigned as Special Rapporteurs to propose work programmes and draft articles.

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